european counter network
london

contraFLOW

Nov/Dec 1995
FREE

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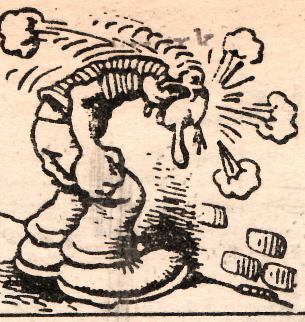


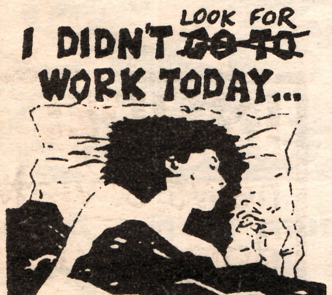
HANDS OFF OUR GIROS OR WE'LL NICK YOUR BIROS

31 protesters got nicked and face charges including theft of / handling stolen biros after a roving demonstration against the Job Seekers Allowance around Brighton.

About 75 angry claimants wandered around Brighton on October 2nd, demonstrating outside and trying to get into Job Centres and offices running claimant harassment schemes. After failing to get into various offices because of a large police presence, the claimants directed their attention to the Labour Party who were holding their Rally in some posh building on the seafront. The labourites, particularly the celebrities like Sir Wedgwood and Mr Skinner who are accustomed to being adored by protesters, were rather shocked by the abuse and football-style chanting, but with the party's support for attacks on benefits and workfare schemes, as well as most other attacks, they should start getting used to it. Jack Straw probably wasn't so shocked, after his attacks on the homeless, to be picked on, and then his hotel invaded. A few people managed to get onto the roof for a while, but press claims that people got into his hotel room, and that he was punched, are unfortunately untrue (unless it was some other posse in the area at some other time). Frank Dobson, who helped open Reading council's grass-a-claimant hotline (the same week as the Sun* set one up) was not found.

Leaving the Labour Party to their posing, the demo wandered off again, with the cops quitting following, and found the office of the Grand Metropolitan Trust, where various of them had previously suffered indignity and harassment on their various schemes. Grand Met, who own Burger King among much else, have been involved since the start in claimant harassment schemes, and in anything that gives big business more say in social provision. Gillian Shepherd has recently been handing over careers advice work to them, presumably on the grounds of Burger King offering such good careers, at ú1 an hour, or maybe because their boss Sir Allen Shepherd is such an active Tory supporter.

So the building was occupied, banners hung out, and after a while the cops turned up. People were told to leave or be arrested, without saying why, and then when most people were walking out, they were nicked, again with no reason. 31 people in the holding cell was a laugh, especially as someone still had some dope and thought it best to get rid of it, but then came boring hours in the cells, enlivened only by the (possible) charges - breach of the peace, criminal damage and possession of biros that might have been nicked, dear dear!



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* While the Sun have been loudly bleating along to Peter Lilley's attacks on claimants, stealing money needed by the "deserving poor", they've not been mentioning certain companies getting away with not paying tax that could go to the deserving poor. A certain News International, for example, who paid only 1% last year, and nothing for the previous two years, stealing a few hundred million from those in need.

LAMBETHS WINTER SALE

Lambeth Council, in their ultimate wisdom, have decided to get rid of around 300 of their so called 'void' (so called because a lot of the voids are squatted) properties by auctioning them off, who knows what the reason behind the sell off is but it seems like a good money making venture (perhaps to pay off some of their corruption debt) and an easy chance for some lambeth councillers to pick up a few houses on the cheap (at least 1 tory counciller was bidding at the first auction) and if we were really cynical the sell off could be seen as a subtle way of getting rid of the 150 squatters who live in some of the houses the council are auctioning.
whatever, the auctions are likely to virtually wipe out squatting council owned places in lambeth, if only because there won't be (m)any left.

'LET THE BIDDING COMMENCE'

The first (of many) auctions took place in the disgustingly decadent Connaught Rooms in Covent Garden on the 23rd October, around 50 squatters turned up to vent their anger at the hoards of greedy speculators, leaflets were handed out as people went in pointing out how inefficient lambeth council are at removing squatters (among other things) the demo was vocal everytime a squatted house came up, and at one point a one way food fight ensued - and it wasn't them doing the throwing - then (predictably) the police turned up and the squatters were evicted. As far as we know all 6 squatted houses were sold
All this isn't some new idea thought up by the clever people at Lambeth council, Hackney have already held auctions at the same place, and practically every council has been trying to dispose of as many properties, and occupiers as possible. central government have been tightening the reins on local councils, forcing them to sell to tenants (and not letting them spend the money raised) and generally moving towards an end to any council role in housing at all. The latest government White paper and a recent nasty court decision mean that councils will only have to find homeless people somewhere for a year or so, not actually house them. In other words, no reason for councils to own any homes. Every council is tightening up on rent arrears, people who inherited tenancies and paid rent for years but don't have a right to the place......

ANY ADVANCE ON 1 DEAD YUPPIE

Lambeths 'grand plan' to sell off excess (ha!) housing stock isn't just a money making scam for a bankrupt council, if only it were as simple as that. it's one of the major stages of Gentrification, squeezing out the poor and undesirable, and goes hand in hand with the major redevelopment plan for the centre of Brixton which has already started with the re-opening of the ritzy cinema.
The £33 million re-development will make Brixton a dazzling CCTV controlled shopping (profit) area attracting money (and the obnoxious who have it) to the area,which the developers are not afraid to boast about. but of course they fail to mention increased police harrassment of people who are seen as damaging to the profit ratio of the area (ie. people who will scare away the yuppies), price increases in the area and rising rents, making it more and more difficult for poor people to live in Brixton, forcing them into estate ghettos that will become more run down or making them move out altogether. And with every other borough forced into competition for private and quango controlled cash, and for the yuppie custom meant to come with it, some are not going to succede, leaving them to fall further into the shit.

The struggle in Lambeth is continuing with plans to judicialy review the council's decision to create more homelessness, to resist the evictions in court and elsewhere, to make sure those empties that aren't already squatted become so...... but its going to take more than this to put a stop to their plans for a prole-free London. While we've been trying to defend our ghettos, our squats, estates, streets, we've all been losing space. Its us, or the market. This town ain't big enough for the both of us!

contact **Sink the Brixton Challenge**,
c/o 121 Railton Road London SE24

PREPARING TO RESIST

HISTORICAL NOTE

While we're on the subject of biros, ever wonder where they all disappear to. Well, a bit of historical research has come up with some interesting facts, to do with a certain groupuscule that split from the Bordigists in the 1950s and then seem to have vanished. The reality, according to documents recently discovered, is that the Poltergists, as they called themselves, decided that any open action was futile and that the undermining of capitalism had to be carried out in secret. After ten years of theoretical debate, they developed a strategy of specialised training in removal of biros, with the expectation that this would bring the system to its knees. Well what do you expect from a bunch of politicos?

contraFlow finally has an e-mail address!
this means not only is there another way for you to contact us with yours news, views and events, but also that we have another way of distributing this information round the world.
The paper is just one of the means of communication, so stuff that doesn't get in will still get around in other forms, and we can get more info to you.
To keep this project going we need your support, inluding any spare cash you happen to have lying around, or maybe we won't be able to bring out another issue. If you think information flow is worthwhile, help our cashflow.

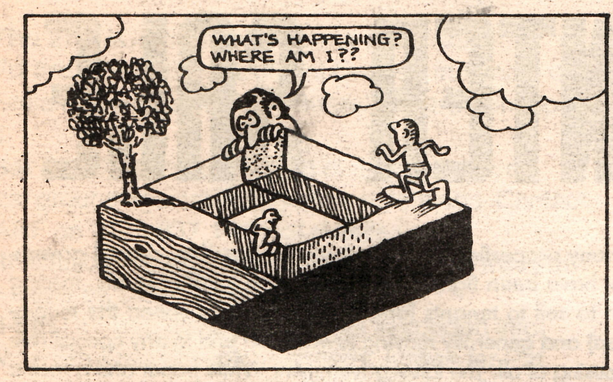
INSIDE:
news & views,
dates and
debates,
bicycles and
wheelchairs,
resistance,
and plenty
more.
not inside,
all the stuff you didn't send us

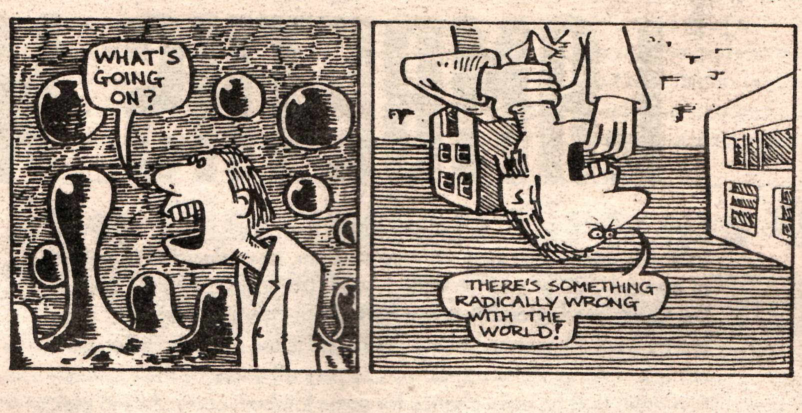
AUNTY FLOW SAYS.....

Welcome to a new issue of ContraFLOW, with a leaner, fitter, collective, downsized to meet the needs of tomorrow. Or in other words, what the fuck is going on? Collective members, like the rest of the fucked-up world have been going through a period of lack of confidence in what we're doing and whether its really worth all the work. The fact that you're reading this shows that some of us still think that producing CF is worth the hassle, but that doesn't mean we don't have our own problems.

We don't want to bore you with internal problems, but they're pretty symptomatic, and its all about making ContraFLOW whatever it is we think it should be. Not only is CF not what any of us really want it to be, we've all got certain doubts about what it is we want, about what relationship there should or even could be between writing a zine, going on actions....... and changing the world. Recently people have been pushing in different directions but now there's general agreement, that we don't know. Its not that these problems are new - to some extent the way we have tried to produce CF in the past has been about trying to work out and express these connections and problems, and its not that we're getting old, some of us were before CF was born. We are particpating in a general disillusionment, but one that could actually lead somewhere. This is a great time for disillusioning ourselves, but what we need is to do it properly, so that as well as losing our illusions about activism or politics, we also give up the illusion that we can't do anything. So, while we're carrying on, we'll be trying even harder to help develop our ideas about change, and we want you to join in.

So as well as the normal newsy bits, we include in this issue contributions questioning what we're up to, what we're up against, what we're up for, because otherwise it simply doesn't make sense. This doesn't mean CF is going to become a theoretical rag, there isn't room, but there could be more changes coming soon.


WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHERE AM I??


WHAT'S GOING ON?
THERE'S SOMETHING RADICALLY WRONG WITH THE WORLD!

IS THIS A NIGHTMARE?

why we must smash contraflow

I'm one of the producers of contraFLOW and I quit. I quit because I want a life. Okay, I'm lying. It's hopeless! I'm still a 'political activist' and I'm still helping run contraFLOW . I'm just a fucking hack when it comes down to it, and what sort of life is that?

contraFLOW theory...

Okay, it's time for some contraFLOW context. At some point, there needs to be an understanding by anyone who reads this newspaper as to what on earth we think its all about. Well, okay...contraFLOW is a paper put out by ordinary people seeking to encourage other ordinary people into 'doing something' to change society for the better. Er! Sounds a bit liberal. What about this - contraFLOW is a paper produced by revolutionaries who have an interest in changing the way we have the world set up right now (capitalism = bad) into a wholly different way of having things (anarchism [approx.]= good). Alright, I'm just getting facetious now but I'm just trying to understand the papers part in any political dynamic. contraFLOW is information (news, analysis, practical ideas etc) about social and political struggles. It is info about the struggle by those with no stake in society (traditional names - the proletariat, the working class) against those with all the power and wealth. contraFLOW does not seek any appeasement or reforms from those in power nor any assimilation into the powerful class but a total transformation of today's society into a world run without power and without privilege. You could call the political system we want to bring about 'anarchism' although contraFLOW is not an 'anarchist' paper in as much as we don't all define ourselves as 'anarchists'. Our desires for a future society are close enough that we get along and can agree (in the main) with the contraFLOW analysis of things. When it comes down to it, we are informing you of our political ideas about things and we want you to think about it, pretty much agree with it and join in the struggles to transform society.

con-traFLOW reality...

There's no getting away from it, the paragraph above is uncut politics, pure and simple and demonstrates how mind-numbingly dull politics is. For the reasons mentioned above, contraFLOW spews politics like that every issue and I wonder who on earth gets anything out of it (apart from other activists or those who like to see that something of a resistance to the plan is still continuing). When trying to look at what politics is, there are many answers - politics is a con, everyone knows that. Politics is boring. Politics is the inversion of living. Politics is what left-wing students do. It's what loony-left or nutty Nazi 'political' groups do. Or worse still, it's what politicians pretend they are doing. It's something alien and despised by the the majority of the population of this planet. But this doesn't really actually define what politics is. At the some point you have to look at what we all get up to and see it as some sort of political activity. Going to work or signing on is a part of a 'politics' because both activities are a part of the ruling political process. We are expected to work and if we can't then the State (in the U.K at least) provides us with a little life-support money. If we choose to sign on indefinitely as opposed to getting job then that's 'politics' too. But it's not politics, the moving and shaking and moulding of society, but the word itself that conjures up images of boredom and pointlessness because those images are invariably of activists' (politicians, Nazis, anarchists) forced political activity.

In our defense, I'd say our boring political activity is more imaginative than some and sometimes we actually transcend it for something quite real and alive. But that's not much to defend, is it? There seems to be so much more out there that's a lived-in version of what politics should be but the paper and the very collective itself that throws this together cannot grasp what it is. For myself, the reality of what a living 'politics' would be remains elusive. I know that the way we operate is bankrupt and seeing as I just wrote that bit, why am I still a 'political' activist ???

what reality ?

My politics / activism is based on being for revolution. I mean a revolution of thought and deed that creates a better society for every single person. Think of hierarchical power such as politcians and business people (our leaders) and those that defend their interests (army, cops, judiciary etc). Well I'm against all that. Think of the way society is run and its prevailing power structure - men over women, white over black, 'man' over nature, straight over gay, young over old, fat over thin, able over differently abled, rich over poor, (all the classic -isms!). Well I'm against all that too. I'm talking about a massive global social upheaval that's virtually impossible to get your head around, let alone create or maintain. I try to do activity that challenges the established order (maybe) and tries to destroy it and replace it with a free society. In those terms, it seems to be like rather an uphill battle and a recipe for depression and unhappiness. Living in a world so shit when you could be living a world so great is a bit of headfuck. But because the activism I'm writing about is one of immense possibility and immense desire for something radically different, there no way it can't be viewed with suspicion by you (or by me). I mean, why do I, you, he, she, we, you, they do all this...what's our fucking problem? I'm rather like someone who insists that the planet is flat trying desperately hard to convince the world of my great opinion. I'd really like to see my activity as a choice I make to sometimes engage others with my opinions, desires and hopes and get them to tag along too (and that's more than the aside of bricking cops or Nazis). On that level it doesn't feel too bad. It feels almost human amongst a desire for humanity. But the suspicions still lurk...thus

Some Arguments In Search Of Coherence

Despite all this talk of lovely logically argued appeals for change or mentions of a 'living politics', let's face it, I'm just burnt out on being a Rent-A-Mob politico. One demo just seems like another, one more eviction battle to fight, another leaflet to prepare, the latest issue to produce. It's more like a job. Yuk! Most of the stuff I do is because of habit or due to a history of involvement rather than a real sense of meaningful revolutionary activity. It also isn't personally rewarding anymore. I've lost interest in what the fascists are up to or what new Anarchist bookshop just closed in the US. It's not that I now think fighting fascism or continuing the existence of a great set of ideas is a bad thing, it just seems to be a whole lot more removed from my own changing life. That's perfectly fine. A lot of what we do has to come down to age. It's weird but true, the older you get, the more stuff changes without even having a great deal of control over it. Some people want families or to travel, or explore other realms, interests etc. No one stays being a vivacious 20 year militant forever and I'm suspicious of those that do. At different times in your life, you have different needs and the endless enthusiasm for another bundle with 'the nazis', another attempt to unite a bunch of irreconcilable factions or plotting another dismally supported action, seems to fade as other realities, other adventures, other experiences, other people (usually not activists) get in the way, you know, it's called having a life free from the sense of duty or guilt we impose on ourselves in the name of the 'the struggle' . I've understood for years that all the grand plans that today's rent-a-mob are having a spiffy time with, are probably failed plans that we indeed tried five years back, ignoring (or ignorant) that the activists who tried it before us also failed with it. (Just think, as a new recruit to the cause, there's so much for you to learn about before you burn out , so pay close attention. Nipping at the heels of older activists shouting 'sell out' and 'old fart' is only playing your historically pre-determined role quite on cue). The cyclical nature of political activism - the same groundwork, the same disagreements, the same dropping off of activty - regardless of what century where are in or what any State is doing, is, well, it's a bit of a drag. The 'issues' change year by year as society fills up the space/time continuum with it's latest version of what is and what isn't allowed but the more revolutionary end of resistance to that society (i.e the horse I backed) hobbles along a decade behind fighting yesterday's failed political battles and scratching its head for clues. Concessions to our angry demands to allow diversity to flourish do surface, granted by politicians to us in the form of rights, upheld by laws. Gay rights, equal rights, right to abortion etc...things do change some lives for the better but, of course, I want more. I want everything. At some point the frozen in time sentence ***'what on earth do I think I'm doing?'*** came chillingly to mind. Other questions surfaced - Why am I interested in all this stuff when so few others are putting as much work into it as I do? Surely someone has to fight cuts in benefits, Nazis, patriarchal society, vivisection if we're not just going to give in? What can I possibly say my own activism has achieved for my desire for freedom? Why are the only people I can relate to activists? Am I running around as an activist merely to encourage other people to become activists? Isn't it the case that politics as an activity in itself is pissing in the wind? How can I escape what seems to be my robotic, ideological functioning? How can I possibly give up something that now seems incoherent and dumb when I truly still want to change the world? What do I do next? Contradictions inherent in the activist system come to mind too. All that selfless slog, the self-denial, the sublimation of my personal 'reality' (the good and bad things about me) to my Great Anarchic Goal. Politics becomes political work mirroring the very aspects of society that I'm supposedly attacking (self-sacrifice, the work ethic, policing my thoughts/desires instead of trying to understand them, the illusion of the importance of 'activity', denial of my own daily needs and wants, emotional repression for the sake of the collective or the political end) In a roundabout, pooly written way, this comes back to the classic late-twenties, revolutionary activist realisation - this is all bullshit, so why am I still doing it? Where does my running about Xeroxing flyers on squatting, meeting four nights a week and feeling generally responsible for the world fit into my wonderful, humourous, warm and humane / deeply troubled, anxiety-riddled (tick as appropriate) personality. This is, in the main, not revolutionary activity - it's just activity!

Most of what is written about in contraFLOW I don't care about. Well, in that horrible sense of 'politics', I care about it but I care about in the abstract way that I care about the victims of Bhopal or that I oppose French nuclear testing. I care about it in the sense that I want everyone in the world to care and we'll have a revolution. In terms of a very close connection to most of the events we cover, well I don't have a lot, so I'm just caring by default of being an activist . Seeing as most of what we write about here you could call bad (cops hitting people on the head, people starvng to death etc) then that's a lot of default. There's always my rage against the atrocities of capitalism when I want to get into it but that's kinda blunted in the day to day because how much of the 24 hours there is can you spend crying and raging? Activism confronts me with so many horror stories that the details don't even matter anymore. It's just a collection of struggles I carry around with me and sometimes I do work in specific areas of that ragbag of dissent. It's not really something I can help happening, I don't know personally every single oppressed person in the world. I just hear about 'em and maybe I do something to help. It's as woolly as hoping that the (supposedly) revolutionary activity that we do, in some way benefits oppressed people everywhere by virtue of creating a revolution to end all oppression worldwide.

and there's more...

"Passionate ideology and deep belief makes political history AND that is precisely why we find politics and history so terrible to contemplate'. R.A.Wilson in "Natural Law' 1987

I've become just a bunch of rigid dogmatic ideals with no person left. My activism and it's the outlook it gives me doesn't destroy prejudice, oppositions, fears etc, it builds them. It doesn't see people or the world as anything other than a blob that mutuates to the simplistic cause and effect of revolutionary activity. It's an endless round of nay saying, a weary step by step, join the dots version of how to change life. Starting off with only one answer and trying to paste that onto many millions of questions is a bit fucking dumb. Political activism pastes it's answer over every single person's different reality (their character, their social situation etc), reducing the individual to being only a part of the mass that needs convincing of anarchism (or whatever ideology you choose). It divides the world into those for, those against and the unenlightened. For bunch of people so into freedom, why choose activity or such an outlook that's so imprisoning?

KILL, KILL , KILL for inner peace...

So I want to kill my ideological anarchist side because my revolutionary political activity (as opposed to my dreams for a better world to live in) seem like a bunch of confusing, self-induced contradictions. I want to kill that side of my thoughts because, HERE IS THE SCARY PART, I actually don't even believe in most of them anymore, it's a fucked ideological side that comes from years spent doing completely alienated political activity. It is learned behaviour. My non-political side is far more humane and subversive. That's why I have to quit. It isn't a matter of giving up being 'political' and that means having the sense of the possibility to change things. I more see it as just facing up to the hideous 'reality' of the non-reality of politics and political activism. It's squaring up to the illusion of revolutionary activity and decking it, once and for all. Biff!

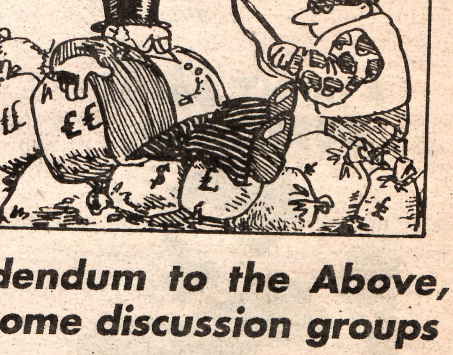
I certainly have no intention here of denying anyone who becomes an activist the chance to have that genuine activist experience and lifestyle. It's life-affirming being chased by riot cops who want to capture you and send you to prison for burning that bank just then. It's life-affriming to be part of a major social struggle, something that brings us closer together as people and destroys the notion that we all stand and fight alone. Even figuring out what the fuck's going on in your head and why is important for a sense of liberation for you and others who have to live in the same world as you. I just want to put my shit down on paper for no more than three reasons.

1) to start to bring together my own very confused thoughts on why political activism is bollocks (and this is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of my own incoherent but self-appreciated critique) and to encourage others to look more deeply into the sour world of robotic, ideological political frenzy they may be part of and act accordingly to what they see. I'm interested in well-argued or crap invective against this article because it really is only a start for me and there's nothing I'd stake my life on here. I'm also interested in why people might like reading contraFLOW too?

2) because as someone said once 'the trouble with anarchists is that they put up with other anarchists' (and you'll either understand this or not). I feel like I'm going backwards in time when I feign enthusiasm for what anarchists are getting up to thesedays. I don't care. It's great that people still desire an anarchist society and will fight for it. Whoopee! It'll probably always be that way regardless of whether we are anarchist activists doing anarchist projects. It just takes a long time for the critiques (others and your own) to kick in and get a bit of a broader perspective on what freedom can really be about, here and in some future Utopia™. How many articles on the anarchist approach to nationalism or violence can you read in a lifetime? I've trod the boards on that one and now it's time for my pipe and slippers and the chance to read and do something else. I'm always reading that 'Anarchy Lives!', well when do I get the chance eh?

3) well, last one. Because this really is all about my attempts to de-label myself and my wish to not have to identify myself (i.e belong) with anything and thus my desire for freedom (a freedom that includes freedom for everyone). It's about conquering the fear of leaving the easy nest of the anarchist social scene and relating to the world on better terms. It's discovering my version of reality or non-reality, political or whatever, and about what I want for myself. It's all confused but that's because nothing is absolute ! I can't pretend anything otherwise. It's a Dear John letter to the struggle..."I'll always love you, you know that, it's just that I..." etc etc. It's a resignation letter to anarchism. It's 5000 words of mangled up, confused personal angst and desire and a possible escape route. I love you all. Death to the pigs !

PS. I really have quit contraFLOW (5th October 1995)


NO-EVERYTHING IS QUITE NORMAL
AND WE'RE HERE TO MAKE SURE IT STAYS THAT WAY!

An Adendum to the Above, and then some discussion groups

What do you do when you and your mate agonize over all this for months -na, it's been years- besides write a neat rant announcing your departure? You've still got that old activist urge in you, just can't leave politics alone — so you *ORGANIZE SOME WORKSHOPS!* But of course.

For a couple of sessions now a regular group of us have been meeting down at the 56a Info-shop for some organized discussions around issues of the 'personal': on liberation, anarchy, sexuality, our politics, and how it all fits together. These discussions were born out of some desire to go a bit beyond the hackneyed, traditional dialogue people of radical political persuasion get into and dig a bit deeper, perhaps get new insights and ideas on all the old issues eternally raked over. They also came out of a hope to break down some of the barriers we as 'politicos' or 'anarchist-inclined' folk have built between one-another, the barriers that make it difficult to relate to each other on a personal level outside our politics, like, on a level of feelings andemotions, you know? ("Oooo, you hippies!" No fucking way, man!) It's been interesting; the three hours we (about 14 of us —most of us strangers at first) spend together could easily stretch into days if we had the time for it. But I'm optimistic.

Yet still it feels as if something is missing. We begin getting into discussions -

continued on back page

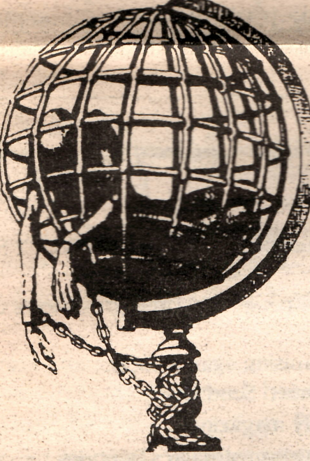
why haven't i packed up and gone home?

okay so why haven't i quit yet, everyones dropping like flies and it's funny because in a strange way i can see why; i can see why activism seems so dumb.
i don't particularly want to go on another predictable [*insert your own favourite hated brand of state socialism*] soaked demo, where the only fun you have is sniggering at the ardent slogan disciple who forgot to turn their megaphone on, or laughing in disbelief at their monotonous droning chants. it annoys me seeing the same old faces running round in circles organizing and keeping things together (by the most slender of threads) surely others must feel as strongly about the same things? i mean i've met lots of them i'm sure, at some point; i can't really remember when though. perhaps 'annoys' should read *'depresses'*.
activism is unhealthy --and not just for your physical well being, it's a breeding ground for martyrdom and burn out, and doses of either are bad news but rife, especially in a scene where so little seems to change year in year out.

WHY? WHY? WHY?

so why am i still "involved", an "activist" if you like (though i can't say i really like the word, probably to do with how i've heard it used. it kind of implies a kind of hierarchy like i'm somehow better than you because i'm doing something), it would be easy to say 'i don't know, i just do because i do' but the thing is i do know and it's not for my own personnal gratification and ego, or as a talking point down the pub (though i suppose i would say that), call me naive (and getting back to the point) i see contraFLOW as an important mechanism for letting people know that some of us are fighting back against our oppression, that some of us do want to live in a better world (free from bosses, police, politicians, money, harrassment ad infinatum), i just hope it's not just the same old hacks who read the paper - if it is then things have to change!

and yeah contraFLOW isn't how i want it to be (what in my life is really - quick pass the noose) but i'm not going to give it up, not because i feel a compulsion, like i have to do it else the 'struggle' or my life will fall apart if i don't, but because (sometimes) i enjoy it, and like ex-collective member X has said "our boring political activity is more imaginative than some and sometimes we actually transcend it for something quite real and alive"
the sad thing is i'll probably still go on the demos, and still do this, and still get worked up about that. but then perhaps my dissolusionometer hasn't hit overload yet



BALLS TO THE SLAVE TRADE

On the evening of Saturday 9th September, 48 people were arrested while protesting against a "ball" in Bristol. This was no ordinary ball. It was an event to celebrate 500 years of merchant venturing, or to put it another way, a trade of prosperity and vaste wealth that was built on the slave trade.

The ball itself was a private affair underneath a huge marquee, that was attended by hundreds of toffs including top city councillors, captains of industry and the tory toerag MP William Waldergrave. This "slave ball" was protected by 600 police including some decked out in riot gear, while riot vans had many of the roads in the area closed off. Noone from the local working class communities were invited, let alone anyone from the black communities of Bristol. In all this event was a disgusting celebration of slavery, and on the night over 300 people turned out to demonstrate against the sickening spectacle of the rich celebrating their sick history and sipping champagne and scoffing caviar.

At about 10pm, when the slave-ball was in full swing, some of the protestors kicked down the security fence and got into the grounds of the ball, but only to be picked up straight away by the hundreds of cops who were on standby, who came flying in, truncheons in hand and were itching to use them. Three or four protestors needed medical attention to severe facial wounds afterwards. By the end of the police round-up, 48 people were arrested and taken to copshops all over Bristol, and many were kept in cells for up to 15 hours. Most were let out with a slapped wrist, but 9 were charged under the Public Order Act.

A bust fund has been set up for all those charged, to pay off fines and travel costs (some charged came from other areas) - any donations to South Bristol Anarchists, PO Box 1076, Bristol, BS99 1WF

THIS LAND IS (A) MINE

On the morning that the Sunday Torygraph reported that some naughty people had taken out a planning application to turn Michael Heseltine's back garden into an open-cast mine, he was awoken to find that work had already started.

About 60 people, some with hard hats, head torches, luminous jackets etc, had descended on his land near Banbury in an amazingly well co-ordinated raid at 5am. A small area was staked out and digging begun, but no coal found, so the dug-up turf was arranged to form appropriate slogans. There was no security and it was some time before the cops turned up, and when they did they just told us that the digging could be criminal damage, but we'd done enough by then anyway.

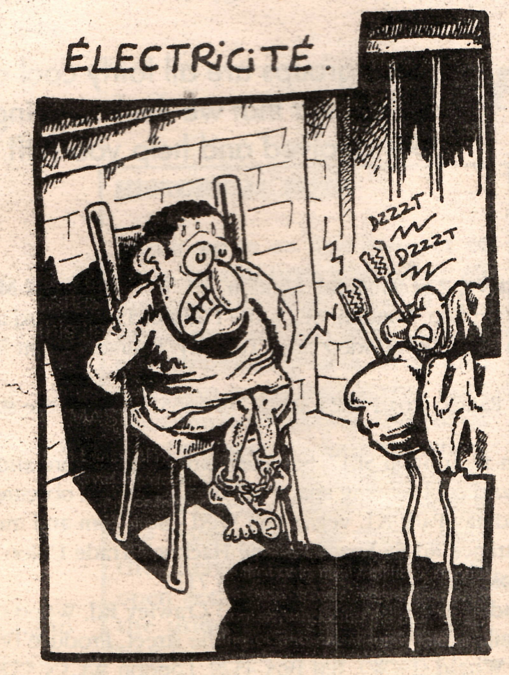
It was an odd mix of redundant miners, native Americans, Women Against Pit Closures, eco-types and general action-types, come together to protest about open casting. . Since Heseltine's destruction of the mining industry, supposedly on the basis of "lack of demand", open cast mines have been opening in large numbers, detsroying the environment and local health, and bringing at best temporary crap jobs. Heseltine appeared at a window, in lilac pyjamas, and told the cops "I thought we'd sorted out this trespass thing - get them off my land". The cops however were happy getting double time, and after a picnic, an improvised game of cricket and a march past the front door, the protesters went away, for the moment.

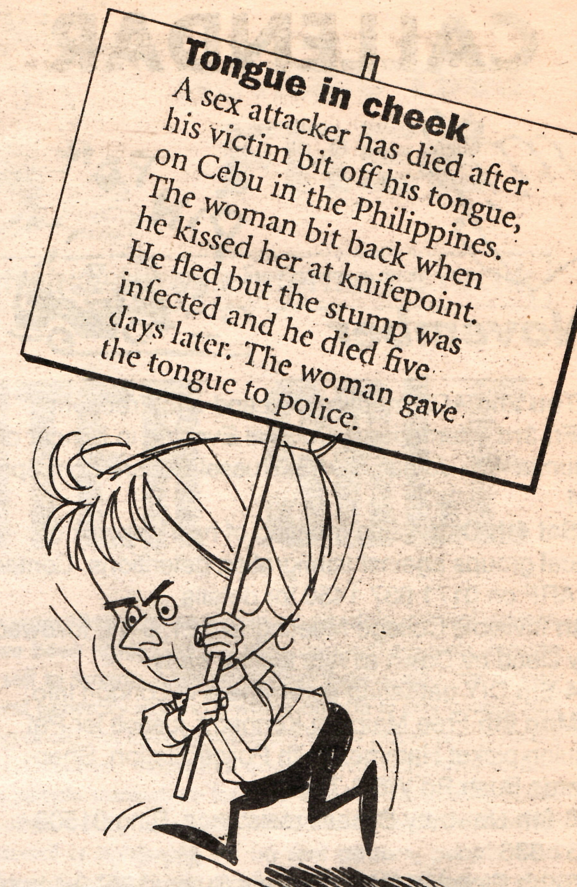
STRIKE THREAT WINS JOB BACK

University College Hospital nurse and union rep Dave Carr was reinstated to his job the day before other staff were due to start indefinite strike action to support him.
Dave had been sacked for being "aggressive" toward a manager - in other words standing up to the bastards, and it was obviously meant to be a threat to all disgruntled and active staff. Management even called the cops to remove him when he went to his locker instead of leaving the hospital immediately. the cops responded; "a nurse? in uniform? no way!" - solidarity between workers in uniform?

The reinstatement came after an 11 hour appeal tribunal, chaired by Lady Brenda Dean, former print union leader, now on the board running the hospital (down). The sacking was replaced by a final warning, so the threat's still there.

While the campaign within the hospital was obviously strong enough this time, hospital users and the local communities had little involvement - as usual there were calls for support, meaning turn up for a demo then fuck off again till next time you're called up. More important for the organisers was the usual gang of other union "representatives", impressive till you realise, pretty quick, that they're all really just representing the same party, the same substitution for real solidarity. While the defeat of this attack must be welcomed, it is unfortunately people like Dave Carr who are holding back and dividing our struggle for our hospitals, our health and our world.
For background to the struggle at UCH and the role of the stewards there, read the article in *CF8* or read *Occupational Therapy from News from Eeverywhere, Box 14, 138 Kingsland High St London E8.*





Tongue in cheek
A sex attacker has died after his victim bit off his tongue, on Cebu in the Philippines. The woman bit back when he kissed her at knifepoint. He fled but the stump was infected and he died five days later. The woman gave the tongue to police.

more evictions...

The King's Cross Womens Centre is facing eviction from the Community Housing Association (CHA got the centre when Camden Council sneakily sold it off in 1993) who want to increase the rent from £104 to £6000 a year.Eviction would mean closure and the loss of the vital services the centre has been providing for 16 years.
Write or phone CHA with your demands! Mick Sweeney, 100 Chalk Farm Rd., London NW1 8EH tel: 0171 267 7020 or black faxes to 0171 428 4201

Kings Cross Womens Centre 71 Tonbridge St., London WC1H 9DZ tel: 0171 837 7509

Travel Update

DAN HIT BRUM

DAN, the disabled people's Direct Action Network, hit Birmingham in October, while the city was hosting the national Bus and Coach show, to protest at inaccessible "public" transport. Over a few days, they managed to block up the infamous Spaghetti Junction as well as the centre of town, and visit the station and National Exhibition Centre.

The three days of action, from October 12th to 14th were to highlight the lack of action to make transport accesible, at a time when bus operators were visiting to buy up inaccessible vehicles expected to last on the road for 20 years. DAN were demanding that all new buses be accessible, existing ones to be made accessible when refitted or within a maximum of ten years, an end to disabled people being forced to travel in guards vans, making trains and underground, and all timetables and information, accessible ....

TRANSPORT FOR ALL

MASS CRITICAL

At approximately 9.30am on Thursday September 14th Emma Charlotte Cray was cycling south accross the junction of burdett Road and Bow Common Lane on her way to work in Greenwich when a tipper truck, equipped with a wholly inadequate and thoroughly dangerous rear-view system, turned left into Bow Common Lane and crushed her: she was killed instantly.

Although she had only been in London for about 6 months Emma was a fantastically enthusiastic masser who had missed only 2 rides in all of this time. She was due to take up a teaching post in Thailand in October and was frantically arranging her schedule so that she wouldn't miss the September Critical Mass.Though her name mightn't be familiar to everyone, regular and occasional massers alike would have instantly recognised her brightly-coloured pink and green cycle as she weaved her way among us with her moonbeam smile and bright sparkling eyes. You were the wind Emma, clear and refreshing and exhilerating to the end. we all loved you like hell and miss you terribly and the world is a much duller and quieter place without your incandescent sparkle to light it all up.

Septembers Critical Mass, which Emma so wanted to be on, went down to the crossroads where she was killed, to remember and salute her, to transform the roads from a place of fear and isolation to one of togetherness and hope.

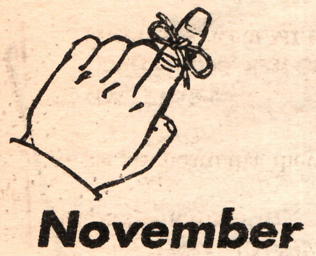
Another regular Masser has since been killed as well, again by a lorry, this time at Angel, Islington. How many more?

REMEMBER CRITICAL MASS - last Friday of every month
REMEMBER EMMA

MAXIMUM CONTROL

In the US 'supermax' prisons and 'control units' have been used to keep subversive and political prisoners away from causing mischief and organising amongst other prisoners. They use the age old technique of isolation designed to frustrate and destroy prisoners mind and soul. A Bureau of Prisons spokesperson has even said that control units are designed to 'stop the spread of revolutionary ideas in jails and in the outside population', so they really make no bones about it.
Now the UK government, obsessed with US prison ideas (privatisation, boot camps), has had the same idea to hold all top security prisoners in one new supermax jail. They are talking about two possible sites, one in Derbyshire and one in Cheshire, both at sites of existing Young Offender Institutes. it's obvious that the first ones in will be Strangeways rioters, troublemakers and politicised inmates. The govenments new control efforts won't go without resistance.

CALLENDAR



November

- **Thu 2nd** ACF meeting on Land and Freedom
- **Fri 3rd** International Cultural Evening in honour of Mumia Abu-Jamal, SOAS, Russel Square from 8pm £4
- **Sat 4th** Organising meeting of new network of local groups against immigration detentions. Contact CARF on 0171 837 1450 for details

4th Invisible College Meeting @ 121, 9-11, followed by Dead by Dawn all nite techno party

- **4-5th** DIY gathering somewhere in London info:
- **Mon 6th** Free Malcolm Kennedy, justice for Pat Quinn picket Hammersmith Police Station, Shepherds Bush Rd W6 6-7pm
- **6-8th** Newbury Bypass resistance. Ring 01508 531 636
- **8-9th** Picket of "Management Summit 95" 9-11am. top bastards from McDonalds, nestle etc will be speaking at this event at the Park Lane Hotel (Hyde Park tube) Tel 0171 713 1269 for info

- **Sat 11th** Scatha, Doom, Dis-fear benefit gig for 121 Centre Building Fund. 8-late 121 Centre (see contacts)
- **Sun 12th** Demos to stop sale of Hawk fighter planes to Indonesia. contact CAAT 0171 281 0297
- **Mon 13th** demonstrate in support of Keith Mann (ALF activist) at his appeal, Royal Courts of "justice", Strand, from 9am
- **Sat18th** London Ecology Conference 10.30-6 @ Battlebridge Centre, Kings X, info 0181 442 8640
- **Fri 24th** Critical Mass bike ride to freedom, from South Bank (by National Film Theatre) 5.45pm

24th Court case resulting from "Mother" free festival of 11 people who are accused of organising fun. 10.30 at Corby Magistrates Court, up north.

24th Day of Action and protest in Oxford against benefit attacks, and

- **Sat 25th** 3rd meeting of Groundswell network fighting benefit attacks. Contact Oxford Claimants Action Group c/o OUWCU, East Oxford Community Centre, Princes St, Oxford OX4 1HU

December

- **3-4th** Earth First Quarry action. Info 01935 82 50 74
- **4th** Malcolm Kennedy picket
- **7th** Close down BAe Warton for the day, info 0161 834 0295
- **9th** Direct Action conference in Brighton info 01273 685 913

Why is your event not here? Because you didn't tell us about it. Now we're on e-mail, you've no excuse.

SUPPORT THE WELLING 8

On September 14th 8 people were sent down for defending themselves in carefully orchestrated police trap at the anti-fascist march against the BNP HQ Welling in October 1993.

Karl Anacoura - RN0599, **Sanjiv Karla** - RN0598. **Steven Kelly** - RN0318, **Mark Gay** - RN0594, **Paul Gay** - RN0593. **Charles Ryder** - RN0595, **Russell Wild** - RN0597. **John McFeely** - RN0596

we've just heard that they are now all being held at:

HMP Elmley
Church Road, East Church
Sheerness, Kent ME12 4AY

(Books & magazines can be sent, Postal Orders payable to HNP Elmley with prisoners name & number on the back)

continued from page 2

fucking way, man!) It's been interesting; the three hours we (about 14 of us —most of us strangers at first) spend together could easily stretch into days if we had the time for it. But I'm optimistic.

Yet still it feels as if something is missing. We begin getting into discussions about vulnerability, honestly difficult things, but then allow ourselves to get sidetracked because it becomes too scary. That's alright, it's to be expected because we live in a world where This Is The Way. But some of us don't want it that way.

Because someone so eloquently stated it at the last meeting, and because everyone non-hesitantly nodded their heads in agreement, we're going to have some more super-duper and hopefully intense workshops around all this stuff because "Politicos are the most miserable lot I've ever met!" But we're going to try to do these discussion groups a little differently because some of us actually want to approach that scary arena called 'vulnerabllitiy' and 'honesty' because we've seen that the alternative, ie. not approaching it, hasn't done us a whole lot of good. In other words, we're miserable too and we want out.

So these "workshops" as you might call them, the ones that follow, are the ones we're going to be doing and the idea is something like this: we want everyone and anyone to come along, 'cuz we're all fucked up, political hacks or not. We want people who come not necessarily to be hyper-extroverted and emotional people but we want them to be people willing to take a few risks and open themselves up a bit so that maybe we can get somewhere deeper than we're accustomed to. We're hoping the group stays pretty stable, as in keeps the same people, because we hope to get to know each other a bit and thus feel more comfortable talking with each other. We're going to try to pool a bit of our knowledge to come up with actual exercises to try to facilitate easier openness with each other.

56a Discussion Groups @

56a infoshop, 56 Crampton St, London SE17
(Elephant & Castle or Kennington tubes)

Discussion Group One, Monday, 11 December, 6pm

Opening Meeting, ie. we're going to get to know each other and look at some of the following by use of exersizes:

- How has the idea that there are "rules of nature"affected our outlook on society and politics in general? How have we blindly accepted the notion of certain 'rules'?
- Is it legitimate to blame The State for all the shit around, and who is "The State" anyway?
- Why do we believe we have to change or save the world and does it really want to be saved anyway?
- Why is it we are so ready to take on the shit of the world when — are we ready to take on our own shit? (ie. deal with our own fucked up lives and emotions?

Lots of how we work with the world suggests that it is something outside us, which we can judge or describe objectively. What about trying another approach? Is communication one way?

Discussion Group Two, Tuesday 26 December

"Ism's" - what are your own personal "isms" that you define your life and world by?

What is an "ism", something that just applies to the other ie. racist, sexist, etc., or something that applies to us as well? (anarchism/anarchist, feminism, punkism...) Are "ism's" about putting one over another? And if so is there an advantage to that? How do you box and label yourself, politically and otherwise, and how do you box and label others? Do all these boxes and labels move us forward or hold us back? If we free ourselves from ideology ("isms") does that mean we don't care or have a stake in anything anymore? Shit, good question.

Discussion Group Three, Monday 8 January, same as above

Why are anarchists and politicos so damn normal? Reality and stuff

Suppose you went to an anarchist meeting and people started talking about their recent experiences with mysticism. Or the fantastic orgasms they'd had or didn't have recently. Or some in the group broke down crying and talking about the abuse they faced as a child. Why are anarchists so normal that the chances of this happening are near zilch and if they did happen we might well freak out? Why are we so sure we have the One True Understanding of Reality? Doesn't that question make you feel a bit wierd? Haven't you ever felt just a little wierd, had your perception of Reality fucked with a little and it freaked you out? Don't most things go a bit deeper than the hard, fast, materialist reality anarchists perpetuate? Are we really so sure we know what's going on??

Discussion Group Four, Monday 22 January

What do we want that hasn't a damn thing to do with politics?

All our fancy words and slogans aside, what do we r-e-a-l-l-y want? Like, let's put our political tunnel visions aside a night and see if we have any idea really what we want. Face it, when we forget all our dogma for a minute do we even have any clue what we're all about? When we peel away our politics, what are each of us left with, and how does that make us feel? Do we feel we've developed into something we want? Something more than an "anti-fascist" or such? Can we help each other do this in any way, or is it strictly a solo venture anyway?

Discussion Group Five, Monday 5 February

Do politics make us miserable or do miserable people make politics?

There they go on the "misery of everyday life". So are we really all miserable or is that just something miserable people say to make themselves feel better? And if we really are all miserable, are politics and economics all to blame? Or maybe it's not that simple? What about all the expectations we build for ourselves based on our politics, ie. to be a "strong, independent woman", "a hardcore anti-sexist male", and how does our sttruggle and inablility to live up to our expectations perpetuate our misery? How can we find the true core of all our shit and subversively subvert it?

Discussion Group Six, Monday 19 February

Does preaching our Completely 100% Absolutely Correct ideas about the world work as a means of change?

Interesting Publications

- **Squatting Is Still Legal,** leaflet from ASS and SQUASH, gives the lowdown on the current situation. Available from ASS, 2 St Paul's Rd, London, N1. New version of the Squatters Handbook out soon.
- **Bad Attitude**, 121 Railton Rd, London SE24 (£1/SAE)Radical women's paper with international perspective and great news coverage. New issue out now.
- **CARF**, BM BOX 8784, London WC1N 3XX (80p + stamp)The usual excellent round up of organising against racism and fascism.
- **Schnews**, c/o On the Fiddle, PO Box 2600, Brighton. Weekly anti-Criminal Justice Act newssheet. Send SAE.
- **Between the Lines**, Box 30, 136 Kingsland High St, London, E8.Interesting 'non-sectarian' lefty magazine:
- **Taking Liberties**, c/o London ABC, 121 Railton road, LondonSE24.Latest news on prisoners, prison struggles, writings byprisoners on the system, etc. Subs 5 waged, 3 unw., for 4 issues. ABC also produce the free booklet, 'No Comment: the Defendants Guide to Arrest'; what happens when you're nicked and what (not) to say. SAE/donations, say if you want a few copies to give to your mates.

these groups are all fairly cool and are actually doing stuff that we think is going somewhere. Get involved and help yourself!

- **Advisroy Service for Squatters,** 2 St Pauls Rd, London, N1. 0171 359 8814 Mon-Fri 2-6pm.useful practical advice, the law etc.
- **121 Centre**, 121 Railton Rd, Brixton, London, SE24. 0171 274 6655. Squatted anarchist space: bookshop, meetings, parties, squatting, free info. Open Mon from 7pm (video cafe) Tuesday/Thursday from 7pm (cafe) bookshop open Mon/Tue/Thu 6-9 plus much more…
- **Brixton Squatters Aid**, 121 Railton Road SE24. 0171 274 6655, back on the streets after a couple of years rest. Call in when open.
- **56a Info Shop**, 56 Crampton St, London SE17. Squatted radical bookstore and more. Open Mon,Thurs,Fri, 3-7pm. Action, books, mags, records, posters and cool reading space full of current and obscure @ mags and booklets.
- **75@ Squat Centre**, 75A Mildmay Park N1, vegan caff Wed - Sun 7pm and much much more.
- **Colin Roach Centre**, 56 Clarence Rd E5 Space uniting Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, Hackney Community Defence Campaign, and other local revos and activists. Tel 0181 533 7111
- **Direct Action Network** (London and national contact), 3 Crawley Rd, Wood Green, London N22 6AN. Tel/FAX 081 889 1361. Disability rights organisation, militant and regularly out on the street. Produce briiliant newsletter. Also have groups in most cities.
- **Industrial Workers of the World** (IWW), BM Box 4529, London WC1N 3XX. Active again, especially amongst despatch, education and unemployed workers. Coming soon to an industry near you.
- **Haringey Solidarity Group**, PO Box 2474, London, N8 0HW. Involved in community/social struggles, produce brilliant local 'Community Action' newsletter. Planning local action against Jobseekers Allowance.
- FareDodgers Liberation Front, Box FDLF, 121 Railton Road, London, SE24. Info, advice, organising, tube parties, against tube penalty fares, well in fact any fares. Send SAE for newsletter.
- **Lesbian Avengers,** meet every Tuesday, 7pm at the WHEEL, 4 Wild Court, London WC1. "Non-violent direct action group committed to raising lesbian visibility and fighting for our survival and rights".